

REMARKS

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HON. JOHN A. DIX, OF NEW YORK,

ON THE PROPRIETY OF SENDING

A MINISTER TO THE PAPAL STATES.

DELIVERED

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, MARCH 21, 1848.

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MINISTER TO THE PAPAL STATES.

The motion to strike from the Appropriation Bill the item for a mission to the Papal States, being under consideration in the Senate—

Mr. DIX said: I voted yesterday against the amendment of the Senator from Indiana, [Mr. HANNEGAN,] proposing a resident minister to the Papal States. I did so, because it was brought forward in opposition to the proposition of the Senator from Missouri, [Mr. BENTON,] to send out a minister plenipotentiary. If this motion to strike out fails, and the Senator from Indiana moves his amendment again, I shall vote for it; and in stating my reasons, as I propose to do now, without waiting for his motion, I hope it will not be considered out of place if I present some statistical details in relation to the condition of the Papal States.

I desire, in the first place, to say, that I do not regard this as a political mission, unless the term political be understood in its largest sense. Much less do I consider it a religious mission, as the honorable Senator from North Carolina [Mr. BADGER] would have us regard it. I consider the Pope, to all intents, as a temporal sovereign. He has been so for the last eleven hundred years. I believe the first territorial possession of the Pope was conferred upon him by Pepin, the father and predecessor of Charlemagne, in the eighth century. It consisted of the Duchy of Rome, or, at that time, more properly called the Exarchate of Ravenna, and was wrested by the King of France from the Lombards, who had overrun northern and central Italy. It extended from the present frontier of Naples, on the Mediterranean, to the mouth of the Tiber, including the Southern Campagna and the Pontine Marshes, and running back to the Sabine and Volscian hills. In the twelfth century, the Countess Matilda, of Tuscany, bequeathed her possessions to the Pope. They embraced the patrimony of St. Peter, on the Mediterranean, extending from the mouth of the Tiber to the present frontier of Tuscany, and the march of Ancona on the Adriatic, with the adjoining district of Spoleto. Large accessions were subsequently made by conquest—Umbria, Romagna, Perugia, Orvieto, Città di Castello, Bologna, Ravenna, and other cities and districts of country. In the seventeenth century, the Duke of Urbino abdicated in favor of the Pope; and at a still later period, some further additions were made by arms. Thus, the territorial possessions of the Pope are held, like those of other sovereigns, by succession, donation, and conquest. I consider the territorial possessions of the

Church as much the dominions of the Pope, as the territorial possessions of Spain are the dominions of her Most Catholic Majesty; and I see no more reason to decline diplomatic relations in the first case than in the last, unless there is, in other respects, a propriety in doing so.

It is true, there is a peculiarity in the form of the Papal government, from the fact that the temporal head of the State is also the spiritual head of the Roman Catholic Church. The Senator from North Carolina very justly remarked, that his chief ministers were ecclesiastics. As is well known, the most important political body in the Roman States is the Sacred College of the Cardinals, who are the princes of the church. They are seventy in number, the same in number as the disciples sent out by the Great Founder of the Christian faith to preach the gospel to the world. Six are cardinal bishops, fifty cardinal priests, and fourteen cardinal deacons. I believe the number has been invariable for two hundred and fifty years, though it is not always full. All vacancies are filled by the Pope, who is chosen by the cardinals from their own body. The government is, therefore, an unlimited elective monarchy, or, if you please, a hierarchy, of which the Pope is the head.

The government is administered, under the direction of the Pope, by the Secretary of State, who is a cardinal. He is aided by several departments, bureaus, or boards, the chief of which is the Camera Apostolica, corresponding with our Treasury Department. It is under the charge of the Chamberlain, who is assisted by a number of cardinals and subordinates of different grades. There is also the Buon Governo, charged with the municipal police of the States; the Sacra Consulta, to which is intrusted the civil and political administration of the provinces; and the Sacra Ruota, the great court of appeals in judicial proceedings. There are several more of these boards, of which I do not remember the names or the functions; but they are all under the direction of cardinals. The Chamberlain is the only one of these executive officers who is appointed for life; and the reason for the distinction is, that he administers the government on the death of the Pope for nine days, when a new election takes place; and during that period, he has the privilege of coining money in his own name. The Secretary of State, who is the Prime Minister and the confidential adviser of the Pope, besides having the general direction of the administrative functions

of the Government, presides especially over the Sacra Consulta, or the department for the provinces—to give it a name suited to its functions.

There is another class of official dignitaries of high rank, under the Papal government—the prelates. They are always of noble birth, but not always in holy orders. There are some two or three hundred of these dignitaries employed in various departments of the government, civil or ecclesiastical. The post of prelate often opens the way to higher preferment, and is next in importance to a membership of the Sacred College. These are the great officers of the government.

Mr. BADGER. Will the Senator allow me to ask him—for my recollection is not very accurate, and I am taking a great deal of interest in what he is saying, and listening to him with much pleasure—whether I understand him correctly as saying that these prelates are not always in holy orders? Are they not either in holy orders or else undergoing an ecclesiastical apprenticeship, which involves the design to take holy orders?

Mr. DIX. I said they were not always in holy orders, and I believe I am not mistaken. They usually, if not uniformly, occupy posts under the government. Some of them are governors of provinces, under the denomination of delegates; and many of them are employed in the executive departments. Some of them become cardinals; but I should not consider it accurate to say of them as a body that they were undergoing an ecclesiastical apprenticeship.

Let me now turn to the political divisions of the Papal States.

The Papal dominions are divided into twenty provinces. The first is the Comarca of Rome. The other nineteen are divided into legations and delegations. The former are six in number, and have each a cardinal to preside over them. The latter are thirteen in number, with prelates as their presiding officers. Each province is divided into communes, with peculiarities of local government.

In the provinces, the legations and delegations have a council, (*Congregazione di Governo*), consisting of the *Gonfaloniere*, or mayor, of the chief town, and from two to five councillors, according to the magnitude and importance of the province. They are named by the Pope, and hold their office for five years. The councillors have no vote; but when they differ in opinion from the presiding officer of the province, their reasons are reduced to writing and sent to the Secretary of State.

Some of the delegations are divided into districts, with governors subordinate to the delegate. Each district is again divided into communes, with their ancient magistrates and councils. These councils are close corporations, the members of which are self-elected, subject to the veto of the delegate, and retain their seats for life. A *Gonfaloniere*, or mayor, elected from their own body by themselves, presides over them. Of these communes there are some eight or nine hundred, if I remember accurately, with similar forms of administration.

Thus it will be seen that the whole government is as far removed as possible from popular influence. It is from the centre to the extremities founded and administered upon the principles of a close corporation; and this is its chief peculiarity.

The administration of justice partakes of the na-

ture of the political organization. It is founded on the basis of the *Corpus juris civilis* and the *Corpus juris canonici*—the civil and canon law. All criminal proceedings are conducted with closed doors, and the testimony taken in writing. The accused is entitled to the aid of an advocate, called the "*avvocato de poveri*," (the advocate of the poor,) who is appointed by the Pope and paid by the Government. Imprisonment is the chief punishment for crime; fines are rarely imposed; there is no such thing as liberation on bail; and the whole administration of criminal justice is so dilatory that there are always a very large number of persons imprisoned and awaiting their trial.

In all I have said, it will be readily seen how much the present head of the Papal States has to reform—in the frame of the government, in its administration, and in criminal jurisprudence. There is no participation by the people in the administration of public affairs. In Tuscany, Napoleon introduced publicity in criminal proceedings, and it has survived all succeeding changes of the government. In Rome it is excluded. Whether it was introduced there by Napoleon after the deposition of the Pope and the establishment of the kingdom of Italy, I do not remember, but I have no doubt that it was.

What changes the Pope contemplates, how far he proposes to allow the people to participate in the administration of public affairs through the choice of their own magistrates and the enactment of their own laws, I have until very recently considered doubtful—nor is the extent of the reform he contemplates very distinctly understood now. It will be recollected that a few months ago he called together a council of delegates from the different provinces. I read his opening address to them with great care, supposing it would contain an outline of the political changes he contemplated. He stated that he had called them together for consultation, which seemed to exclude the idea of legislation; that extravagant expectations had been entertained as to his purposes, and that he intended to transmit to his successors unimpaired the authority he had derived from those who had preceded him. Not long before this announcement was received, I was invited to attend a public meeting in the city of New York, called to express the general sympathy which was felt in his measures of reform. Not being able to attend, I addressed a letter to the committee of arrangements; and there were several other letters written by gentlemen of distinguished character, and some of them occupying high official stations. Not feeling at that time quite sure of the sequel, I did not indulge in the enthusiastic expressions which some of the letters contained. I endeavored to render the Pope full justice. I desire to do so now. And I must say that the recent intelligence from abroad justifies all the expectations which have been entertained in respect to his contemplated measures of reform. He has already done much for good government in Italy. He arrayed himself boldly at the outset against the influence of Austria—an influence which, since the general pacification of Europe, in 1815, has been a perfect blight upon the growth and progress of popular freedom. He has resisted fearlessly the designs of that government upon the independence of the Roman people. He has refused to the Austrian troops a

passage through his dominions for the purpose of aiding the King of the Two Sicilies in putting down the struggles of the Neapolitan and Sicilian people against the narrow-minded tyranny by which they have been oppressed. He has done more. He has formed a national guard in the Papal States; he has put arms into the hands of the Roman people, and he is preparing them by military exercises for the assertion and maintenance of their own rights. He has, in a word, given an impulse to popular freedom throughout Italy; and it is owing in a great degree to him, that constitutional forms of government have been given to the people of Sardinia, Tuscany, and the Two Sicilies.

The late arrival affords us still more gratifying evidence of his movements. Two papers have been put into my hands, from which I will read brief extracts. The first is from a letter in the *Courrier des Etats Unis*, dated in Paris, which I will translate literally:

"The reaction of the revolution in Naples has been felt, as I foresaw, in the other parts of Italy. The King of Sardinia and the Grand Duke of Tuscany have also given to their subjects a constitution, modeled after the French Charter. Pius the Ninth has promised, in a proclamation and in conversation with those around him, something analogous to it. In the mean time, he has changed his cabinet, and has formed a ministry composed almost entirely of laymen. This is a great reform."

The other extract is from the letter of the European correspondent of the *National Intelligencer*, published in this morning's paper. I will read it:

"The good and conscientious Pope has had misgivings as to his power to grant a reformed constitution to his people, fearing that his doing so would interfere with the oath which he took at his accession to office, to hand down the *temporalities* of his kingdom uninjured to his successors. He submitted his doubts to a council of ecclesiastics learned in such matters, and the result is, a decision that his yielding to the wishes of the people and the spirit of the times, will not be an infringement upon his official oath. It is supposed, therefore, that the people of Rome will soon receive a constitution founded on the same principles as those of Naples, Sardinia, and Florence. His Holiness has advanced a great step, by his employment of well qualified laymen in high positions in the State, which have hitherto been filled by ecclesiastics. Three vacancies lately occurred, and three liberal-minded laymen succeeded three churchmen. How much does the world owe to Pius IX! His liberal conduct first put the ball of reform in motion; it is not destined to stop until it has regenerated Europe."

Thus it appears that the Roman people are to receive from the Pope a constitutional government. And, what I consider of great importance as a measure of reform, he has already begun to introduce laymen into his political councils. At the general pacification, in 1815, it was understood that the chief ministers of the Pope were to be chosen from the laity. This understanding was violated; and it has been one of the leading causes of public discontent in the Papal States. It has been for a very long period one of the reforms most earnestly sought for; and it may be hailed as the precursor of an ultimate separation of the ecclesiastic and secular branches of the Papal government, by conferring political offices on laymen, and confining churchmen to the exercise of their ecclesiastical functions—an arrangement favorable alike to the Church and the State, by promoting the purity of the one and the prosperity of the other.

While the Pope has much to reform, he has much to contend against—not only from the opposition of those who are hostile to all progress, but from the embarrassed condition of the finances of the Papal States. Some ten years ago, the reve-

nues were about nine millions of dollars; two millions and a half were derived from internal taxes, chiefly on landed property; about four millions and a half from the customs, excise, &c.; about nine hundred thousand dollars from lotteries, and the residue from miscellaneous sources. Some of these revenues were collected at an enormous expense. The revenue from lotteries, for instance, which yielded nine hundred thousand dollars in the gross, cost about six hundred thousand in the collection, leaving only three hundred thousand in the treasury as an offset to the general demoralization of which they were the cause. In the same year, the expenditures exceeded the revenues about half a million of dollars. Four years ago, I understood the deficiency exceeded a million, and the preceding year a million and a half. From the difficulty of obtaining statistical information, I could not ascertain the amount of the public debt; but from the interest paid on it, amounting to about two millions and a half of dollars, exceeding one-quarter of the entire revenue of the Papal States, it must have exceeded forty millions of dollars. It cannot now, I think, be less than fifty millions. It may be much more.

Sir, this is a very heavy pecuniary burden for a small State. The whole superficial area of the Papal States is about thirteen thousand square miles—less than one-third the area of the State of New York; and a population, according to the *raccolta* or census of 1833, of two million seven hundred thousand souls—about the same as the population of New York. While Rome has two hundred and ten inhabitants to a square mile, from the difference in surface, New York has but sixty. The population of the Papal States is very unequally distributed. Only about one-third of the surface is cultivated, and a considerable portion is very thinly inhabited. I doubt whether the population has much increased during the last fifteen years. In 1833, the city of Rome had about one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants; in 1838, it had less than one hundred and forty-nine thousand—a slight decrease.

The Papal States have some commerce; but little is carried on in her own vessels. There are but two harbors for vessels of any considerable burden—Civita Vecchia, on the Mediterranean, and Ancona, on the Adriatic. The excellence of both ports is due, in a good degree, to the Emperor Trajan. There were other valuable ports once, but they have become useless for large vessels. Terracina, the ancient capital of the Volsci, was formerly a naval station of great importance; but it is now obstructed by deposits of sand. The Porto d'Anzo—the ancient Antium—about midway between Terracina and the mouth of the Tiber, is also obstructed, and nearly useless, from the same cause.

There is but one navigable river in the Papal States—the Tiber. As there have been some allusions to it in the course of the debate, I hope I shall be excused if I make some references also to its condition as to commerce and navigability. It empties into the Mediterranean seventeen miles from Rome. As it approaches the sea, it divides into two channels. On the left arm stood the ancient Ostia. It has long since fallen into ruins, and a modern Ostia stands near it; but, from the unhealthiness of the place, it is almost deserted,

and the channel of the river is nearly filled up. The right arm is navigable to the sea. On this channel stood the ancient city of Portus; but only the ruins are now visible, and the modern town of Fiumicino has risen up a mile and a half below. The channel is narrow, deep, and rapid. The description of Virgil, as he makes Æneas first see the Tiber, is still applicable to it. I do not know that I can quote him accurately, but if I do not, there are gentlemen of classical learning on both sides of the Chamber who will correct me:

—"fluvio Tiberinus ameno,
Vorticibus rapidis et multa flavus arena,
In mare prorumpit."

The description is not inaccurate: with rapid whirlpools, and yellow with earth, it bursts into the sea. The current is so rapid that vessels could only stem it with strong winds; but they are now towed up by steamers. Vessels of small size—among them a steamer—go up to Rome, and at some seasons there is a good deal of freighting done on the river. Indeed, it is navigable for boats to its junction with the Nera, some forty miles above. But from the rapidity of the current near the city and below, deposits of sand are constantly obstructing the passage, and an annual appropriation of money is made to keep it open.

The exports of the Papal States are not large, but they are numerous. They consist of corn, oil, silk, skins, fruits, woad a substitute for indigo, which grows spontaneously in Southern Italy, hemp, &c. Wool is exported in large quantities to England; and among other exports, is tobacco, of which they send abroad annually about three hundred thousand pounds.

They can scarcely be said to have a commercial marine. Some ninety vessels, averaging probably about eighty tons each, constitute the whole, excepting fishing smacks, and small coasters. There are six merchant vessels in the city of New York with an aggregate tonnage exceeding that of the ninety merchant vessels of the Roman States. This, however, we need not regret; for if we can extend our commercial relations with them, we shall do all the carrying, both for them and ourselves.

Agriculture, the basis of all industry, is in a very depressed state, and from peculiar causes. The great peculiarity of the agriculture of the Papal States is the division of the champaign land into immense farms. The Campagna around Rome, called the "Agro Romano," (the Roman field,) the Maremma extending from the frontier of Tuscany, along the coast, to the southward, and the low lands in other districts are owned by a few persons. The farms usually contain several thousand acres. The entire Agro Romano, comprising more than one-fifth of the Campagna, contains over eight hundred and fifty square miles. This tract is in the hands of about forty farmers, or "Mercanti di Campagna," as they are called. The farms are worked on the "Mezzeria" system, or at halves, under the direction of *fattori*, or stewards, who occupy farm-houses on the land, while the owners live in the cities. The same system prevails in Tuscany, where it has worked tolerably well. In Rome it is thought exceedingly unfavorable to agricultural improvement. Something is attributable to the peculiarity of the Roman plain, in respect to climate and health, which renders it necessary to devote the greater part to grazing. In the winter

it is covered with cattle and sheep—not less perhaps than a million of both, under the guardianship of shepherds and herdsmen. As the summer advances, the Campagna becomes too unhealthy to be inhabited, and the cattle are driven to the Sabine hills, and even to the mountains of the Abruzzi. When the harvest season arrives, the heat becomes almost intolerable; and multitudes of the laborers, who come down from the mountains to gather the harvest, perish from the fatal effects of the malaria. As soon as the grain is gathered, the Campagna becomes a desert until the summer heats are over. Neither men nor cattle are to be seen. The buffalo, who seem to be proof against the heavy pestilential vapors which the burning sun brings out from the humid earth, are almost the only inhabitants of the deserted plain from June to October.

With this imperfect agriculture, a complete monopoly is given to the rural proprietors by the corn-laws of the Papal States. When the price of flour on the Mediterranean is under \$9, and on the Adriatic \$8 25 per barrel, the introduction is prohibited. It is the same with wheat. When it is under about \$1 40 the bushel on the Mediterranean, or \$1 20 on the Adriatic, it is not allowed to be introduced. The operation of this system is to give the entire market to the Roman agriculturist, and by excluding the cheaper breadstuffs of the Levant and the Austrian provinces on the eastern shore of the Adriatic, to compel the Roman people in some districts, and in times of scarcity, to eat dear bread.

Notwithstanding the depressed condition of the industry of the Papal States, there is no country capable of a more rich or varied production; and if the measures of reform now in progress shall be carried out, and the social as well as the political condition of the people be elevated by the abrogation of bad laws, I know no State of the same magnitude which may hope for a higher prosperity.

I have thus, Mr. President, presented some statistical details in respect to the condition of the Papal States, not with the expectation of influencing the vote of any Senator on this floor, but for the purpose of assigning the grounds on which I place my own. I am in favor of establishing diplomatic intercourse with Rome, first, with a view to friendly relations—the object for which most missions are created; and second, with a view to commerce. I repeat, I do not regard the mission as political, unless that term be understood in its broadest sense; and in this view all missions are political. I consider it our sacred duty to keep aloof from the internal agitations of European States, and from the movements of their sovereigns and people. We must sympathize with everything that is favorable to freedom; but we can do no more. Our rule of action is non-intervention in the political concerns of the eastern hemisphere, and by a rigid adherence to it we may with the more confidence insist on an application of the same principle by European States to the political concerns of the independent communities on this continent. I look, then, first to friendly relations with central Italy.

But I look chiefly to commerce. Depressed as the industry of Rome is, I think something may be done to extend our commercial relations and

intercourse with her, and perhaps also with Tuscany, lying on her borders. Great Britain has an immense trade with the Mediterranean. She sends every year fifteen millions of dollars in value of her own products into Italy alone, and probably several millions more of foreign products, which she imports for reëxportation. A portion of this lucrative trade legitimately should be ours; and I think we may obtain it, if we send a discreet and intelligent man to Italy.

I voted for a minister plenipotentiary, as proposed by the Senator from Missouri, [Mr. BENTON,] supposing it would be followed, if his amendment had prevailed, by a proposition to abolish the post of chargé d'affaires at Naples. The post of chargé d'affaires at Turin I would not have touched. Sardinia is distant, and has distinct commercial interests. But we might have sent a minister with full powers to central and southern Italy, to reside a part of the time at Rome, and part of the time at Naples—an arrangement not unprecedented in diplomatic intercourse with States bordering on each other. I thought, in opening diplomatic intercourse with Rome, it should be done in the mode most acceptable. A minister is accredited to the sovereign of the country to which he is sent—a chargé d'affaires to the secretary of foreign affairs, or the chief executive department. A minister would be on a footing with the diplomatic representatives of the States of Europe, at the Papal Court—a chargé will be inferior in grade and in influence. Rome and Naples are but one hundred and sixty miles apart. Four years ago, a railroad was in a course of construction from Naples to the Roman frontier. It was nearly finished to Capua. Grègory XVI., the predecessor of the present Pope, refused to charter railroad companies. He did not encourage foreign intercourse, social or commercial. Pius

IX. is of a totally different temper. He is desirous of promoting in every way facilities for communication, foreign and domestic. He has chartered a company to construct a railway to Civita Vecchia; and another, as I understand, to meet the Neapolitan railroad at Terracina. In two years Rome and Naples will probably be but five hours apart. The arrangement suggested would, therefore, have been convenient as well as proper. But, as the proposition failed, I shall vote for a minister resident.

Before I conclude, I wish to say a few words on the religious question. I have already said, I do not regard this, in any sense, as a religious mission; nor can I conceive that it can be properly so considered. Gentlemen have gone so far as to suppose that it will be repugnant to the Protestant feelings of the country. I cannot believe there is any just ground for such an apprehension. We send a diplomatic representative to the Emperor of China, who claims to be the sole vicegerent of the Supreme Being on earth. We have a minister at Constantinople, and three consuls, salaried officers, exercising diplomatic functions, in Africa—two in the Barbary States, and one in the empire of Morocco; and the people of all these countries are either Turks, Moors, Arabs, Berbers, or Jews—all utterly denying the authenticity of the Christian faith. And yet, when we propose to send a diplomatic representative to a temporal sovereign in Europe, it is objected that the Protestant feeling of the country may be wounded, because he is also the head of a most respectable and important branch of the Christian church. Sir, I cannot comprehend this feeling, and I am, therefore, disposed to doubt its existence. At all events, I shall vote for the appropriation, and trust to my Protestant friends for a just appreciation of my motives.

